CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A performance prediction system, comprising:

a query component for receiving queries submitted by users for data relevant to the probability that a transaction with an entity will be successful;

a data gathering component for storing relevant data about submitted queries; and

a meta-query component responsive to a meta-query for returning information regarding previously submitted queries.

2. A system as in claim 1, further comprising a performance-prediction component that uses data comprising including the stored submitted query data in making estimations relevant to the likelihood of success of a transaction involving an entity will be successful.

3. A system as in claim 1, where the meta-query component returns copies of submitted queries.

4. A system as in claim 1, where the meta-query component returns edited copies of submitted queries.

5. A system as in claim 1, where the meta-query component returns an indication of a number of queries that have been submitted to the system during a particular time period.

6. A system as in claim 1, where the meta-query component allows a user to register to be notified at some future time of submitted queries that are received about that user.

7. A system as in claim 1, where the meta-query component allows a user to register to be notified whenever a specified number of queries about that user have been submitted to the system.

8. A system as in claim 1, where the query component also comprises a discovery component that allows users to receive a list of entities that satisfy certain criteria.

9. A system as in claim 1, where the meta-query component allows a business to obtain information about queries submitted to the system during a particular time period, and which returned a list of companies that include that business.

10. A system as in claim 1, where the meta-query component allows a business to obtain information about queries submitted to the system during a particular time period, and which returned a list of companies that did not include that business.

11. A system as in claim 1, where the performance prediction component determines statistical correlations between patterns of submitted queries.

12. A system as in claim 11, where the performance prediction component further uses one of actual and predicted performance of entities, and uses the statistical correlations to predict likely future performance based on past and present query data.

13. A performance prediction service accessible by a user over a data communications network, said service comprising a programmed data processor for using acquired knowledge of previously submitted queries when making predictions concerning the future performance of an entity of interest.

14. A performance prediction service as in claim 13, where said programmed data processor further analyzes query patterns and at least one of an actual or predicted performance of the entity of interest, and observes correlations between queries, query patterns and performance to facilitate the prediction of future performance of the entity of interest.

15. A performance prediction service as in claim 13, where said programmed data processor further returns, in response to receiving a meta-query from the user, information that is descriptive of previously submitted queries about the entity of interest.

16. A performance prediction service as in claim 13, where said programmed data processor further returns, in response to receiving a meta-query from the user, edited information that is descriptive of previously submitted queries about the entity of interest.

17. A performance prediction service as in claim 13, where said programmed data processor further returns, in response to receiving a meta-query from the user, copies of previously submitted queries about the entity of interest.

18. A performance prediction system, comprising:
a query component for fulfilling received performance queries;
a source of data comprising performance prediction data, the source coupled to said query component;
a data gathering component for collecting query-relevant data for submitted queries and for storing the query-relevant data in a submitted query database; and
a meta-query component responsive to a received meta-query and coupled to the submitted query database for accessing the query-relevant data for producing enhanced performance prediction information that comprises query-relevant information.

19. The system as in claim 18, wherein the enhanced performance prediction information comprises filtered query-relevant information.

20. A method to provide performance prediction information, comprising:
receiving queries from users regarding at least one entity of interest; and
using acquired knowledge of previously submitted queries when making predictions concerning the future performance of an entity of interest.

21. A method as in claim 20, further comprising analyzing query patterns and at least one of an actual or predicted performance of the entity of interest, and observing correlations between queries, query patterns and performance to facilitate the prediction of future performance of the entity of interest.

22. A method as in claim 20, further comprising returning, in response to receiving a meta-query from a user, information that is descriptive of previously submitted queries about the entity of interest.

23. A method as in claim 20, further comprising returning, in response to receiving a meta-query from a user, edited information that is descriptive of previously submitted queries about the entity of interest.

24. A method as in claim 20, further comprising returning, in response to receiving a meta-query from a user, copies of previously submitted queries about the entity of interest.

25. The method as in claim 20, further comprising collecting query-relevant data comprising at least one of time, date, location, and identity.

26. The method as in claim 25, further comprising filtering the enhanced performance prediction information to remove at least some of the collected query-relevant data.

27. The method as in claim 20, further comprising registering for automatically querying the acquired knowledge.

28. The method as in claim 27, where automatic querying is initiated upon the occurrence of at least one specified criterion.

29. A computer program product stored on a computer readable media for directing operations of a data processor to execute a method to receive submitted queries for performance prediction information; to collect query-relevant data from the submitted queries; to store the query-relevant data; and to use at least some of the query-relevant data to provide enhanced performance prediction information.

30. A system for producing enhanced performance prediction information, the system comprising:
means for receiving submitted queries;
means for storing query-relevant data; and
means for producing enhanced performance prediction information that comprises the query-relevant data.

31. A communications device for operation with a performance prediction service, comprising a communications interface adapted for at least one of submitting a meta-query to the service and for receiving enhanced performance prediction information from the service.